REMARKS

Claims 1, 3, and 5-7 are all the claims pending in the application. Claims 2, 4, and 8 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer.

As an initial matter, claim 1 has been amended to include all of the recitations of dependent claim 2 and the recitation that "a groove width of the narrow shallow groove is set in a range of 35 to 60% of groove width of the main lug groove." This amendment is fully supported in the original specification at least by original claims 2 and 4 as well as the non-limiting embodiment discussed at page 4, lines 22-27.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1 and 3-6 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable over Hawkinson (US Des. 177,233) in view of Tsurunaga et al. (US 5,002,110). Without commenting on the merits of the rejection, Applicant notes that this rejection is moot in view of the amendment to independent claim 1.

Claim 8 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable over Bettoil (WO 01/39994) in view of Japanese Patent Publication No. 4-228308 ("JP '308"). Without commenting on the merits of the rejection, Applicant notes that this rejection is also moot in view of the cancellation of claim 8.

Claims 1-8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) being allegedly unpatentable over Tsurunaga in view of at least one of Japanese Patent Publication No. JP 3-193507 ("JP '507"), Semonin (US 3,467,159) and JP '308.

Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to withdraw the rejection of claim 1 *at least* because the combination of Tsurunaga and at least one of JP '507, Semonin, and JP '308 does not teach or suggest the claimed pneumatic tire having a narrow shallow groove inclined in the opposite direction with respect to each main lug groove; in which a groove depth of the narrow shallow groove is set in a range of 15 to 30% of a groove depth of the main lug groove, and a groove width of the narrow shallow groove is set in a range of 35 to 60% of groove width of the main lug groove.

First, claim 1 requires that the main lug grooves "are disposed in opposing shoulder regions of a tread portion." However, the parts of Tsurunaga's laterally extending groove portions 14 that are inclined in the *opposite direction* to the shallower platforms 16 are not disposed in opposing *shoulder regions* of a tread portion. Instead, it is merely *other* parts, which are not disposed in the shoulder region, of the laterally extending groove portions that are inclined in the *opposite direction* to the shallower platforms 16. Tsurunaga at Fig. 1. These other parts of the laterally extending groove portions cannot be fairly compared to the claimed "main lug grooves" at least because they are *not disposed* in the *shoulder region* of the laterally extending groove, as required by claim 1.

In addition, there is no teaching or suggestion to modify Tsurunaga's pneumatic tire so that it would have a narrow shallow groove width in the range of 35 to 60% of the groove width of the main lug groove. The claimed range of narrow groove widths provides a proper rigidity of the tire tread portion. If, however, the rigidity of a tread is not sufficient, the large deformation of the tread causes problems, such as the development of heat.

Furthermore, the Examiner appears to acknowledge that Tsurunaga does not disclose a tire in which the narrow groove depth is 15-30% of the main lug groove depth. In an attempt to make up for this deficiency, the Examiner alleges that it would have been obvious to use a narrow shallow groove having the claimed depth. Office Action dated May 19, 2003 at page 7, lines 3-13. Specifically, the Examiner points to Tsurunaga's first embodiment's general use of a shallower groove portion (Fig. 1), and to Tsurunaga's second embodiment's lack of a narrow shallow groove (i.e. depth of 0%) (Fig. 3). However, Tsurunaga does not teach or suggest the claimed depth range, and there is no motivation or suggestion to modify Tsurunaga's narrow shallow grooves so that they have the claimed depth.

Finally, none of the secondary references, JP '507, Semonin, and JP '308 (which were cited by the Examiner in an attempt to show shallow groove portions) cures the deficiencies in Tsurunaga, discussed above.

Conclusion

As such, for at least the reasons discussed above, Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to withdraw the rejection of amended independent claim 1. In addition, Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to withdraw the rejection of dependent claims 3 and 5-7 at least because of their dependency from claim 1.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

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